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CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN HON. HENRY
LAURENS AND HIS SON, JOHN, 1777-1780.

[Continued from the July number.]

[13.]

Head Quarters 17th feb^r. 1779.

My dear father.

I had the pleasure of writing to you, soon after my arrival at Camp—and have been since anxiously expecting farther intelligence from Georgia—If it be true that Spain is at length so enlightened on her own interests as to espouse those of America—I am inclined to think that feeble state will speedily be delivered from its present invaders—Such an event or the adoption of my black project alone can save her—if the first be a delusive report—I wish to know whether you think that the force of example, Argument, and above all that of impending Calamity will determine our Countrymen—to embrace the Salutary measure which I propose—if you think my dear father that the chances are for us—we cannot too soon execute our parts—you will have the glory of triumphing over deep rooted national prejudices, in favor of your Country and humanity at large—the former may perhaps have reason to call you her deliverer— The sacrifice you make, will be effaced by the most delicious and enviable feelings—

For my part it will be my duty and my pride, to transform the timid Slave into a firm defender of Liberty and render him worthy to enjoy it himself—

The respect and attachment which I have for the General—the friendship which I have for my Colleagues—will make even a temporary separation from them, a subject of great regret—and nothing could determine me to do it but a certain prospect of being more extensively useful— The General has been as polite as to say that he will be sorry to lose me even for a time—but that he will not object to my going— The nature of my profession separates me from my dearest friend—and it is natural for me not to quit an agreeable military situation—without some assurance of rendering greater services elsewhere—

But I must finish—I entreat that I may hear from my dear Father as soon as possible—and am ever his most affectionate

John Laurens.

Endorsed: John Laurens

17th. february 1779

[14.]

Head Quarters 10th march -79

My dear father.

You will have perceived by my last, that granting the probability of obtaining an act for raising black troops in South Carolina—no time in my opinion was to be lost in applying for it, under the sanction of a Recommendation from Congress—

When I reflect that the present season in that country affords very good fighting weather—that much time will be required for the Journey—that some delays may arise in our Council and Assembly, from the opposition of private interest—that collecting the Levies, at a general rendezvous—from remote parts—and exchanging the unfit for service that will be sent in the first instance—that *transforming* them into soldiers & providing them with Arms

Appointments &c are all works of time— I must confess I am anxious—for if I am engaged in a plan of this kind my reputation is at stake— And a regard to that, would induce me to spend as much time as possible in disciplining and instructing my soldiers before I introduced them to the enemy—while a desire to render service on the other hand would make me solicitous to bring them into the field in the active part of the Campaign—

As a Soldier, as a Citizen, as a Man—I am interested to engage in this work—and I would cheerfully sacrifice the largest portion of my future expectations to its success—

I believe I have in this & former letters—nearly said all that can be offered by me on this subject—at present— Your counsel will be necessary to remove many difficulties—and digest a plan to be laid before the Legislature of South Carolina— My letters will prove to you that this subject occupies my thoughts very much—

I embrace you with all my heart—and am ever my dear
fathers

most affectionate

John Laurens.

Endorsed: John Laurens 10 March
1779 Rec^d. 12th—

[15.]

Addressed: Lieut^t. Col^o. John Laurens
Aid de Camp to His Excellency
the Commander in Chief of
all the American forces—
South Carolina—

Philadelphia 18th April 1779.

My dear Son.

I had the pleasure of writing to you the day before yesterday by Messenger Durst. last evening the packet which will accompany this came to me under cover from Col^o. Hamilton, he says it contains two Letters from your M^r. Laurens which puts me in mind to forward that which I

told you had been illicitly opened. You will also receive two Letters directed to M^r J. Walton, one to M^r. E. Telfair & one to Count Pulaski which I recommend to the protection of M^r. Gervais or yourself.

The Marquis Britaigne who will be the bearer of this is anxious that I should recommend him to Governor Rutledge. That will be done Marquis, in pursuance of an Act of Congress by the President— Ah! but I am not acquainted with M^r Jay.

I then promised him to write to M^r. Gervais & to you, although he is personally acquainted with both, which gave him satisfaction; certainly if I were in Charles Town & the Marquis there too, I would shew him every mark of civility & attention, & I am persuaded my friends will answer for me.


This Gentleman's zeal in our cause must have cost him several Thousands of Louis d'ors, besides much personal suffering; he has been waiting upon Congress almost a whole Year in humble dependence, free from that inquietude which from almost all his Countrymen we have been witnesses of, & yet, there has been great stumbling at a proposition for allowing him 5000. Paper equal to about 400. Silver Dollars, nor did we surmount the difficulty in *one step*—first 3000. then 2000—carefully adding “he to be accountable.” we swallow Camels & strain at gnats.

Our friend Baron Stüben had intimated expectations of pretty large pecuniary compensation, for his expences coming to & in America over & above the pay of Major General, and also for his own expences & those of M^r. Fleury, M^r. L'enfant & M^r. Duponceau, a Report was thereupon introduced from the Board of War, the whole seemed to me, to be incongruous with his propositions at his arrival in York Town, I was therefore induced to call for certain documents & papers relative to the subject in order to enlighten such of our Members as would otherwise have been ignorant, but I made no opposition to the Report, some busy Body must have taken an advantage of my conduct & misrepresented

me to the Baron, otherwise the following dialogue three days ago when he dined with me could never have happened.

What is the reason Mr. Laurens that Congress will not allow me my expences, I told them I was not Rich & I am sure the Committee at York Town promised me.

Why Baron I cannot answer for the conduct of Congress, for my own part I would recommend to you not to press that subject at the present moment, every Member of Congress is sensible of your merit & deserving, I cannot just now so fully assign reasons, as I may at a future time, but if I were to advise, you would delay your demands until our affairs shall be a little better arranged.

 his declarations to me at York Town were that he would expect nothing till the end of the War his running expences excepted—Congress gave him two or four Horses & a Commission of Major General, paid all his Expences at & travelling from Boston at York Town &c—

Well replied the Baron, for myself I will take your advice I will ask nothing yet—I will go to the Army & proceed in my duty—but why will they not do something for Fleury & the other young Gentlemen who have assisted me in my work?

Congress Sir, will undoubtedly do everything that is just & reasonable, there's no Man who has a greater esteem & affection for Col^o. Fleury than I have, but let us consider a little Baron is not Mr Fleury now within one grade of Generalship, how long must he have served in his own Country before he would have arrived at this eminence, with large & honorable testimonials in his pocket.

But my dear Mr. Laurens, Mr. President he cannot live by his appointment, & he must go home if you do not do something for him.

You very well know Baron, the state of our Army & the state of our finances—if the case be so, that Col^o. Fleury cannot stay with us unless Congress will do something more

for him & that Congress cannot do any thing more for him, the consequence will be that he must go home, I shall be very sorry for it.—

The Baron, in no small shew of Choler & rage, although in presence of 4 or 5 other guests, answered, Then, I shall go home, I will not stay.

O Baron Baron, you had just determined the contrary, excuse me for saying, this is really taking advantage of my candor, you will make me more cautious hereafter if you persist in these sentiments—what else could I have said, speaking as an honest Man, if Col^o. Fleury cannot continue with us upon his present appointments & Congress will not because they cannot, with propriety, enlarge them—& he himself points out the alternative, what else could I have said, but I hope Baron you will not make me answerable for all the determinations of Congress. when I am there, I am an individual & speak my sentiments or give my voice without fear prejudice or partiality. I pray you Baron think better of this matter. We went to dinner, the Baron looked grave, I made attempts to raise him, he retired earlier than usual & if I do not mistate with a consciousness of a little transgression. The Deanites are incessant in their endeavors to raise a dis-esteem for me in the minds of foreigners, but they make no more impression upon mine than they would upon adamant with a Goose quill. I will endeavor to do right, if I do not gain *their* applause, I shall nevertheless enjoy an assurance of having deserved it—to be an honest Statesman produces a Man some troubles, but not so many I believe as attends a dissembling knavish one, therefore I'll pursue the old track. I could recite another conversation with a greater Man than Baron Stuben which would more than equally astonish you, but, *it wont do*. & I think the irregular measures which are adopted are arguments, proving, why it ought not.

When Baron Stuben first addressed Congress he produced a Letter from Mr. Deane announcing him Lieutenant General & Quarter Master General in the King of Prussia's Army,

hence I was led to give him the Title of Excellency, in my early correspondence; sometime after he went to Camp at Valley forge I was well informed that he had never advanced near the Rank of Lieutenant General, the Baron did not say to me that he had, but he did not disown it. Mr. Deane intimated that at some former time he had seen his Commissions, but that when he was about to leave Paris in order to embark for America he was not possessed of them, having left them in Germany, & this moment it strikes me, that the Baron might have misconstrued & misapplied my question, How long must Col^o. Fleury have served? &c—but upon my honor I had no design to touch him nor, as I have said above, did I ever think of the subject in this light until the present Instant. however if he has committed himself it is not my fault. if he felt any thing like an attack it was from within his own Breast, neither duty nor inclination could possibly have misled me to upbraid a Man with whom I wished to have continued in friendship. but the times are distempered & the Devils of avarice & ambition are indefatigably improving them to their own advantage.

20th.

'Tis rumored the Enemy have taken the town of Providence, I do not believe it— You will see the News Papers in Mr. Gervais's hands—tell me if my Country Men wish me to remain here, I don't mean a few of them, but generally.

I pray God bless & protect you

Henry Laurens.

Lieut^t. Colonel Laurens
South Carolina.

Endorsed: H. L—to J—

Philadelphia 18th. April 1779.

[16.]

Addressed: Lieut. Colonel John Laurens
Aid de Camp to His Excellency
the Commander in Chief of the
American forces.
now at South Carolina.

Philadelphia 5th June 1779.

My Dear Son—

I had the honor of writing to you under the 30th Ult^o. since which we have received no accounts from Carolina—what! has our State determined not to correspond with Congress? The Lieut^t. Governor's late Letter to the Gov^r. of Virginia seemed to menace somewhat like it.

General M^cIntosh will tell you more news than I should be able to write in a whole day & you will see the News Papers in the hands of Mr. Gervais—some four or five summer like days have extracted the gouty pains which I had complained of for a fortnight before, but my leg continues in a precarious state.

I pray God to bless & protect
you

Henry Laurens.

Lieut^t. Colonel John Laurens
South Carolina.

Endorsed: H. L. to J. L.—
Philadelphia 5th. June 1779

[17.]

Philadelphia, 17th. July 1779.

My Dear Son.

My last communication is dated the 10th Inst. it was forwarded by the hands of Sickles a public Messenger. Yours of the 2^d. June written I perceive with your left hand reached me no earlier than the 12th Inst. this is the Letter which Mr. Leger left in the custody of Col^o. Finnie; you

refer me very particularly to an antecedent date, but none such respecting Military operations in & about Charles Town have I seen. recollect if you can, its date & by whom you transmitted it. & I will endeavor to discover the defaulter or the delinquent.

Dunlap's Paper of this Morning does not inform us as I had expected it would, of the operations of the American Duke d'Alva, late Governor Tryon in Connecticut, he landed at New Haven burnt part & probably the whole of that Town penetrated to & burnt all Fairfield said to be one of the prettiest Towns in America. the Militia assembled, attacked him & he fled to his Ships—this is a general sketch warranted by Rivington of the 10th Inst. with this difference, he says re-embarked. I wish the title of d'Alva may be so fixed on Tryon as to be transmitted to posterity & his memory held in everlasting contempt.

Yesterday we received in Congress dispatches from the Honorable Arthur Lee Esq—containing as complete a vindication, of his own & his Brother William's conduct, as I have ever seen in any case, every charge of Deane's 5th. Decem. refuted, every article supported by vouchers—what a worse figure will this bad servant make before his fellow Citizens to whom he appealed, when his narrative of 139 Pages of vanity, misrepresentation, falsehood & contradiction shall pass under the harrow of Lee's Pen—those who have hitherto been his supporters, appeared to be unhappy while the Papers were reading. tell my friends they will find, that my resignation on the 9th. December was, as I then said to them, the greatest act of my Life. ^s

I have heard nothing lately from head Quarters—the very plentiful harvest, which we have now secured, leads to animation, we are talking of an immediate array of ten or twelve Thousand good Militia, these to join the Commander in Chief & to attack New York; a motion made by Mr. Dickinson seconded by Mr Drayton that Congress should

^s See *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. XIII, p. 232.

join the Army & act en Militaire—this shews more of valour in those Gentlemen than of the wisdom & reflection of grave Senators, but who can restrain the ardor of fighting Men when an opportunity offers? the Motion is on the Table for consideration when it can be taken up consistently with Order.

If I may judge of the state of your Carolina air, from the Philadelphia Thermometer you have hitherto had very tolerable weather, I was just now obliged to throw off a lined-silk, & to cover my body with a Cloth flannel-lined, waistcoat, & I took a little Cold last night by lying under only a thick Cotton coverlid. we have not experienced one intolerable day the present Summer.

I say nothing of my private affairs I know you will aid Mr. Gervais in taking as much thought for them as times will admit of. I remain here under the Commands of my fellow Citizens when my inclinations strongly bend homeward, 'tis high time I were there.

I pray God to bless & protect
you

Henry Laurens.

36 days since we heard
from So Carolina —
I interpret nothing amiss
from this silence.

Col°. John Laurens
South Carolina—

Endorsed: H. L—to J. L—
Philadelphia 17th. July 1779.

[18.]

Addressed: John Laurens Esquire
Lt. Colonel in the Army
& Aid de Camp to
His Excellency Gen: Washington
Charles Town
South Carolina.

Philadelphia 23^d July 1779.

My Dear Friend.

I had the pleasure of writing to you the 17th. Inst by Messenger Graham, we have heard nothing since from Charles Town. I feel a little anxiety to know whether & when you mean to return to Your General & lest we should miss each other on the Road, an accident, which, if it should happen, would mortify us exceedingly. but I have not marked a day for my departure, I shall quit this great House the 12th. August because I cannot afford the Rent, & go for three or four Weeks into cheaper Quarters, my Landlady who is as keen an Abigail as any I know, has outwitted herself, she wanted to raise the Rent upon me & by a miscalculation I suppose, has let it to my Neighbor Mitchel for 6 or 7 hundred pounds per Annum less than I paid—& he has made a firm contract with a penalty annexed.

Your friend Doctor M^c.Henry is in Town on his return from escorting M^rs. Washington to Virginia, he will dine with me to day & we'll drink your health. I have heard nothing from Head Quarters for a long time but I purpose to write to your General by the Doctor, I would give somewhat considerable for two hours conversation with him on certain very interesting & important points. I believe I shall pay him a Visit before I leave this Country.

Col^o. Gervais, Capt M^cQueen & M^r. Wells will communicate to you the Contents of our latest News Papers & other scraps of intelligence which I have transmitted.

My Dear Son I pray God to bless & protect you.

Henry Laurens.

Colonel Dan. Morgan is in Town
& has applied to Congress to accept his
Commission, he complains of Gen Wayne's
appointment to Command the Corps which
should have been continued under him.
he is a good Officer & we will not part
with him, if persuasion can prevail.

I am charged by a great number of
your friends to present their Compliments
Gen Gates in a very particular manner.

Col^o: John Laurens.

Endorsed: H L. to J. L—

Philadelphia 23^d. July 1779.

[19.]

Philadelphia

17 Septem 1779.

My Dear Son—

My last Letter to you is dated the 31st. July—my
silence in the mean time has been owing to that uncertainty
in which I have been held respecting your continuance in
So. Carolina, every body who came from thence assured me
you were determined to come this way very soon, as I re-
main in the same disagreeable state of suspense I should not
have written to you now, had I not been charged particu-
larly with a Letter from your friend Colonel Hamilton, that
Letter accompanied by two which I suppose to be from S^t.
Mary Axe, your Letter intended for M^r. Hutson & one for
M^r. Petrie you will receive under the present cover.

I must refer you as usual to M^r. Gervais for News, but
I may add, we have just recd. advice from Boston that
our Frigates Boston & Deane had captured a Copper bot-
tomed British Sloop of War; the Sandwich Packet bound
from New York to Falmouth; a Vessel with 150 Pipes
Wine from Madeira; these safe in Port two New York
Privateers of 10 Guns each, a very Rich Ship from Glasgow

for N York & one or two other Vessels—these not yet arrived, on board the Glasgow-Man was a Box containing complete apparatus for counterfeiting our poor Dollars, which had been thrown overboard & recovered—Major Gardner, he who was on Port Royal Island, was taken in the Packet. you will probably see all these circumstances more particularly marked in Dunlap's Paper to morrow, I shall be early enough to send one of them.

If I do not hear from you in a few days I believe without further waiting I shall set out for Charles Town altho my own inclination to pursue duty at this very critical juncture & the requests of my friends press me strongly to remain here a little longer

I should inform you I pray God to bless You
Jack Hamm is here a prisoner in the Henry Laurens,
Character of a common Seaman, I am
afraid he has forfeited *all Character*.

Lieut^t. Col^o. John Laurens.

Endorsed: H. L. to J. L.

Philadelphia 17th. Sep^r: 1779

[20.]

Philadelphia 21st. Septem 1779

I had the pleasure my Dear Son of writing to you the 17th. Inst. by a Public Messenger, & of receiving on the 19th. by the hand of Capt. Roberts your favor of the 9th Ult^o.— This Young Gentleman will dine with me to morrow, if I can render him services more substantial than bare civilities, your recommendation will have its weight, with my own feelings respecting him as a fellow Citizen the Son of a valuable Officer who laid down his Life in the defence of America.

I knew, the pride & the naughtiness of the Hearts of so many of our fellow Citizens, would seduce them to spurn at the mode you speak of for completing our Confœderal Regiments; that the avarice of others would impel them to re-

volt from the proposition for erecting black Battalions & I long since foresaw & foretold you the almost insurmountable difficulties which wou'd obstruct the progress of your liberal Ideas.—nothing wonderful in all this—Is it a light work to bring Men accustomed [one or two words obliterated] affluence & absolute command, to submit without murmuring to peremptory Orders under the penalty of Corporal punishment. And it is certainly a great task effectually to persuade Rich Men to part willingly with the very source of their wealth &, as they suppose, tranquility. You have encountered rooted habits & prejudices, than which there is not in the history of man recited, a more arduous engagement. If you succeed you will lay the corner stone for accomplishing a prediction of your Grandfather & your name will be honorably written & transmitted to posterity—but even the attempt without perfect success, will, I know, afford you unspeakable self satisfaction—The work will at a future day be efficaciously taken up & then it will be remembered who began it in South Carolina.

I prospered yesterday in carrying through a Report which I had the honor of presenting to Congress from a Commee. appointed to correspond with General Lincoln, recommending Aid to So Carolina by dispatching three frigates or Armed Ships of War & the North Carolina Brigade to Charles Town; there was much opposition to the measure from certain quarters & the Report underwent some alterations which may possibly be made use of to defeat my views, but as the execution was Committed to the Marine Board where Mr. Mathewes Acts as a Member, I have strenuously recommended the subject to his attention & I confide greatly in his zeal & fortitude.—Should we receive certain accounts of a French fleet operating on your Coast, all that we have here determined to attempt for your relief will instantly be reconsidered & probably vanish.

Gentlemen aver that the Continental Frigate [one or two words obliterated] advantage to the Port of Boston either in a Commercial & pecuniary view, or as a defence—on

the contrary the prizes which those Frigates carry in, work a prejudice to the Citizens of that Town by encouraging monopolizers & extortioners & by stripping the Port of Seamen who would otherwise be more usefully employed in the service of [word obliterated] Merchant Ships & private Ships of War—this doctrine strange as it may appear to Men of no more than common understanding, is proved & illustrated by the extreme reluctance with which Gentlemen representing Massachusetts & Boston consent to part with them only for a few Months in favor of a much distressed Sister State, but when some Men talk of defending So Carolina & of the necessary measures for recovering Georgia, methinks I hear blind Men describing Colours, or Misers haranging on liberality.

Has not So Carolina contributed her quota to the raising a Navy? Has she not a rightful claim to some of the benefits which may be derived from that Navy? Oh! but So Carolina is defended by taking the enemy's privateers from New York, & if you send our Frigates to So Carolina the Enemy will soon know it, way lay & capture them—do not the Enemy as well know when those Frigates sail from Boston on a Cruise for prizes? is it not as practicable for British Men of War from Hallifax, Rhode Island & New York to way lay them coming out of, & returning to, the Bay of Boston as going to Carolina or cruising from thence? Did not they know of the ill concerted enterprize to Penobscot? Had I prevailed by my repeated recommendations more than twelve Months since, to send three Frigates to Cruise near Charles Town we should probably have added three or four British Frigates to our American fleet &c &c.

It has been falsely transmitted to Charles Town that I was too closely connected with the Eastern States, you have now proof of the contrary & I glory in the reproach of being with no Man, with no party longer than he or they steers or steer by the Pole Star of reason, Justice, reciprocity. when Men diverge into the Road of self Interestedness, I walk no further with them In a word, I fear I have given

offence to some of my friends If it be so, I can't help it, I would rather offend my Father than meanly or wittingly transgress against those principles—the offended will upon reflection, perceive their mistake & without suit forgive me nor will this be a strange Phœnomenon in a true account of my Pilgrimage. How many of our Confœderal Ships of War have heretofore been Captured or foolishly lost? but how many have been captured or otherwise lost in attempting to relieve or aid the Southern States? answer, my friends, these questions fairly & you will see nothing preposterous in the proposition for sending three Frigates to Charles Town—if cruizing [one or two words obliterated] Plan they will have as good Cruizing ground from thence [one or two words obliterated] any part on our side of the Atlantic & Boston will be for a little time relieved from the burthen of prizes—My very worthy friend Gen. Whipple, says in his mild & decent manner, well! well! you'll repent this scheme.—but I'll say no more I know my views are pure, my design is to promote the general good of the Union & I trust we shall be all good friends [one or two words obliterated] w.

My quandam opponent Merryweather [obliterated word] to whom I never made any approaches, is now not only placid but kind pressed me to day to take a side of his Chariot, brought me home & will eat Sturgeon with me to morrow—look at the Journal of Congress the 14th. May last &c—If Men will be——if they will do these things, how can I help it? I [one or two words obliterated] ot be illnated or inexorable.

But to return to your Letter, I expect soon to hear your schemes in Assembly have proved abortive & that you have been defeated in your first battle in the Field of Politics—should this be the case I wish indeed to know it *soon*, & to know also your determination respecting a continuance in your native clime, in order to regulate my own movements, I should begin my journey homeward in a few days were I sure of meeting you on the Road or at Ansonburgh, mean-

ing in a few days after two or three important points shall be adjusted in, as honest Mr. Duffield stiles it, the great Council of these States.

I have informed Mons^r. Girard of Mr. Plombards addresses to your Senate & House of Representatives & given him proper extracts from your Letter & from Colonel Gervais's, if the Gentleman has been misled I am in hopes he will see his error & retract before it be too late, he must not expect undue countenance either from Mons^r. Girard or from the Cheval^r La Luzerne.

You talk of a heavy tax, what will you say when Congress shall call on you for about a million & an half of Dollars per Month, a call which you must expect to hear [one or two words obliterated] the 1st. November. We have solemnly pledged ourselves [one or two words obliterated] no more paper Money when the Amount shall be 200,000,000 Dollars, as you will have read in the Circular Letter, this event will happen about the 1st. December & we have not yet determined upon one article of ways & means for replenishing the Treasury & carrying on the War. I feel more fr [two or three words obliterated] nt prospect of our affairs, than is convenient to [one or two words obliterated] paper, lest Rivington should lay his hands on my Letter & magnify.—

I am told Col^o. Laurens gives exceeding good Madeira Wine to his guests at the House in the Garden, whence I presume it must be plenty, & cheap in Charles Town, therefore I request him to lay in a pipe or two for me before Christmas. Colonel Malmadi will be the bearer of this, I don't know whethêr I shall be able to write to Mr Gervais by him if I do not, I pray you let this Letter [word obliterated] both. & if I send but one packet the News Papers will be found in that. I commend you to God's protection & remain My Dear Son

Your faithful friend & affectionate Father.

Henry Laurens,

Colonel John Laurens.
South Carolina.

Endorsed: H. L to J. L—
Philadelphia 21st Sep^r: 1779
at the conclusion
Madeira Wine

[21.]

Philadelphia 27th. Septem 1779.

My Dear Son.

I writ to you the 21st. Inst. by Col^o. Malmedi. the 25th. your favor supposed to have been penned the 7th. reached me, & announced the arrival of Count d'Estaing on the American Coast, if the Count has adhered to his Resolution of remaining with you only eight days, 'tis to be apprehended his achievements in Georgia & So Carolina will not excite a nine days wonder; that slackness in our Militia which you complain of, is very illy fitted to the Count's spirit for enterprize and celerity—be this as it may, I expect, at least, this good effect from his appearance, that the Enemy will scamper off & overturn the Wright government in Georgia & all its appendages, & I hope for greater things.

Congress have authorized General Washington to Co-operate with the French Admiral & General in such manner as he shall judge conducive to public good without applying to them for further directions & have strongly recommended to the middle & eastern States to give the General all possible aid of Men & provisions & also to furnish provisions of flour &c for the use of the Fleet & Army of our Ally.

That Assembly met yesterday for the sole purpose of appointing a Minister Plenepotentiary for treating with his Britanic Majesty on Peace & Commerce, an Act which in my estimation is extremely premature. Mr. Adams & Mr. Jay were nominated, the Ballots twice taken without effect—1st. Ballot 5 for Adams 4 for Jay 3 States divided—2nd.—6 for Adams. 5 for Jay—South Carolina divided—My Colleague had laboured hard two days for carrying a resolution to disqualify any Member of Congress or any one who had been a Member within nine preceeding Months for any office of trust or emolument under Congress—I opposed the Resolution but coincided in the Idea & wished it might be understood by the whole House that a Member should not be appointed, among other reasonings my Colleague in favor

of his Motion had urged, that the appointment of a Member to be a foreign Minister would be degrading; by sending one from sovereignty into servitude—you can't suppose I could hear such sentiments & forbear laughing inwardly—finding me to be clear in his opinion that on the present occasion we ought not to appoint a Member he earnestly requested me to think of a proper Character out of doors after some hours reflection I named to him M^r. John Adams as a Gentleman in every respect well qualified, against whom there could be no exception & to whom these States were much indebted—there rested the matter, until the proposed Resolution & its proposed amendment were ousted by Yeas & Nays—when the Ballots were about to be taken, my Colleague declared for M^r. Jay, I expostulated with him on what had passed between us; observed, that among other motives, I had nominated M^r. Adams on his own principles & candidly & honestly declared to him such exceptions against M^r. Jay as neither himself nor any Man could remove. he nevertheless persisted & South Carolina was deprived of a Vote, I explained to Congress in terms nearly as above written the ground of our division as an apology for my own conduct.

I think no honest Man will censure me, nor would I have it understood that I mean to censure M^r. Mathews, we are perfectly good friends & I believe him to be a very honest Man. I am also persuaded he had not been let into the secret of his self-denying motion, but this must be reserved as a subject for a future moments discussion.*

*this Morning Monday the 27th. September according to my imaginary foresight will be devoted to the appointment of a Minister Plenepotentiary to treat with the Court of Spain, on Alliance & Amity & Commerce—

M^r. Lee will be, as tis intended & expected, superseded by M^r. Jay, an avowed & inveterate Enemy—God's will be done.

these things I say to you & to my good friend Gervais, & to

no body else, unless you shall find it necessary, which I hope will never happen.

Mr. Solikifer has just informed me, that Sir Charles Hardy's Cruise had been made for reconnoitering & scouring the British Channel, finding it clear, he had returned into Port & immediately after, a fleet of upwards of forty Sail, of Merchant Men—probably under some small convoy sailed from Spithead or some port in England, these were more lucky than Sir Charles, they fell in with the french or perhaps the combined fleets, & were every skin of them conducted into Brest—this, Mr. Solikoffer says he read in a Letter from Bourdeaux 42 days old & he is gone to look for the Letter, if it comes in proper time you will receive an extract.

When I writ to Mr. Gervais yesterday I held myself confined to a moment & said I should not write to you, but a violent rain & other circumstances I suppose were impediments to Mr. Downs's departure earlier than this Morning—You will now be so good as to present my Love to my friend & communicate these contents. I learn your black Air Castle is blown up, with contemptuous huzzas—a Man of your reading & of your Philosophy will require no consolatory reasonings for reconciling him to disappointment. I pray God to bless & protect you.

Colonel John Laurens
South Carolina.

Henry Laurens.

[22.]

Philadelphia 2^d. October 1779.

My Dear Son—

I have lately written to you by divers opportunities to Charles Town directed in your absence to Colonel Gervais, from an opinion that you would have left that place & I had suggested to my friends the probability of your taking a passage in Count d'Estaing's squadron; this Idea is countenanced by intimations in your Letter of the 3^d. Septem— which I received three days since. I therefore expect this will meet you at the Head Quarters of His Excellency the Commander in Chief.

You were put in Nomination in Congress by the Honble. Mr. Gerry the 27th. Ult. for the Office of Secretary to the Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of Versailles & were on the 28th. unanimously elected by eleven, or twelve, States—the Salary not fixed—£1000. St^s recommended in a Report, I shall oppose every thing above £700.—but from what fund or funds is even that Sum to be paid?—I know not. the appointment is honorable to you in every appearance & will put you in a road leading to the service of your Country. I know you are equal to the task, nor could I forbear my testimony; it was due to a meritorious fellow Citizen, but I could not engage for your acceptance—therefore you are by no means bound by any promise or even seeming promise on my part—I shall be glad to converse with you before you finally determine aye or no. You may, if you please, receive from me an honest & faithful & I believe accurate state of our affairs foreign & domestic—no attempts will be made on my part to induce or dissuade—you will be left by me to judge for your self. I need say no more but that I long to embrace you.

I pray God to direct you
in all things & I commend you to
his protection

Henry Laurens.

I might have added one word
more—I wait here only to know

your resolution, when I receive that from your self my Horses will be put to the vehicle in which I mean to return to my own poor distressed wretched Country.—

Capt. Roberts's conduct towards the Delegates of So. Carolina has not done the highest Credit to your recommendation—this as a hint.—5th. October—This address remaining on my Table unsealed gives me an opportunity to add,—the Salaries of the Ministers Plenipo: are £2500 St^s. p^r Ann. each—of their respective Secretaries £1000—in full of all expences &c. my protest against both stands on the Book

No!—Men who are sincerely devoted to the service of their Country will not accept of Salaries which will tend to distress it.

Lieut^t. Colonel Laurens.

Endorsed: H. L. to J. L.—
Philadelphia 2^d
October 1779—

[23.]

Addressed: Lieut^t— Colonel
John Laurens
Aid de Camp
to His Excellency General Washington
Boston ⁹

Vestal, British Frigate
New Found Land 14th. [break]

My Dear Son.

the 15th. day after I parted with you [break several words long] Island, that is to say on the 3^d. Inst. the little Mercury [break several words long] captured by Capt George Keppel Commander of the Frigate [break several words long] mentioned, we arrived in this Harbor yesterday. Think of the best that circumstances will admit [break several words long] have a proper Idea of the very kind treatment [break several words long] has experienced, and remember, I hold my self & my [break several words long] indebted to Capt. Keppel.

Admiral Edwards who commands [break several words long] shoar & afloat has ordered the Fairy Sloop of War [break several words long] under the command of Capt Keppel. I am to be sent [break several words long] Mr. Young & Capt. Peckle will probably accompany me. through all the changing scenes of Life, you know my [break] nd.—I pray God to bless & protect you.

Henry Laurens.

⁹ “Philadelphia”, in Henry Laurens’s handwriting, is stricken out and “Boston” inserted in another hand.

Capt Keppel very politely delivered me your Letters to M^{rs}. Laurens, these & many other papers had through superabundant precaution [break several words long] on our part fallen into his hands.

16th. Admiral Edwards has been exceedingly [break several words long] to me, so have the several Commanders of Men of [break] in Port. Captains Barclay, Prescott, Lloyd, B [break] Stanhope &c &c—should their misfortune afford an [break] neither your self nor any of my friends will be [break] acknowledgements.

L^t. Col^o. John Laurens

Pennsylvania.

On board the Vestal at St. Johns 27th. Sept^r. 1780

On the 17th. Inst. Mr. Laurens in pretty good spirits em [break several words long] Fairy for England, and, as the wind has been fair, we [break several words long] at a safe Port. How long Captain Pickles and, [break of a word or two] in here, we know not.

With the highest respect and esteem

I am Sir

Your Most humble & Obed^t. Serv^t.

Moses Young

Endorsed: St. Eustatius 21st. Decem^r. 1780. Received under cover & forwarded by

Sir

Your Most Obed^t. Serv^{ts}.

Via: Baltimore

Elliston & John Perot

Endorsed by Henry Laurens: H. L. to J. L.—

St. John's Newfoundland

14th Septem^r: 1780

[24.]

[In August, 1778, Lieut.-Col. Laurens was sent to Rhode Island to take part in the expelling of the British therefrom. The French fleet under Count d'Estaing was expected to co-operate with the Continental forces, but prior to the action of the 29th at Newport the Count

announced his intention of sailing to Boston without co-operating with the Americans. Col. Laurens went to the Count and protested with his usual vigor.¹⁰ The following is a fragment of a letter written by Col. Laurens at that time. It was probably addressed to his father, as it was found in the Laurens Collection, but the endorsement on the back is in the handwriting of Moses Young, sometime Secretary to Hon. Henry Laurens.]

everything—

I was going on but am called upon the most important business—A Council of War on board the French vessels have determined that the Squadron ought to go immediately to Boston to refit. I am going on board with a solemn protest against it Adieu

J Laurens

Endorsed: Colonel John Laurens
(no date)—

¹⁰ See Vol. II of this Magazine, pp. 271-272; Vol. III, p. 16.